

12-24-21 Christmas Eve (both Services)

Sermon- Celebrate the Light!

Scriptures- Isaiah 7:10-14, Isaiah 9:2-7, Micah 5:2-4, Luke 1:26-38, Matthew 1:18-23, Luke 2:1-20.

Hymns- To be selected by PK, Dave

Theme: As we prepare sing our candlelight hymns and each light our candles, all these lights represent God's light spread from one single candle—the source. As each candle lights another candle, light will grow brighter and darkness will be pushed back.

The October 2001 edition of National Geographic had an article on the "Power of Light" with this quotation:

Light reveals the world to us. Body and soul crave it. Light sets our biological clocks. It triggers in our brains the sensations of color. Light feeds us, supplying the energy of plants to grow. It inspires us with special effects like rainbows and sunsets. ... Scientists don't fully understand what light is or what it can do. They just know that it will illuminate our future.

After just reading that, all the verses on light in the Bible just raced through my mind. There are 76 references to light in the New Testament, and it is used in the following ways:

I. FIRST, IT SAYS THAT GOD IS LIGHT. – In 1 John 1:5, John tells us, "This is the message we have heard from Him and declare to you: God is Light; in Him there is no darkness at all." There's a whole lot of theology here that we don't have time to unpack tonight.

But for our purposes, I think this quote in a commentary expresses the core of what it means that "God is light":

“Light, in the Scriptures, is the emblem of purity, truth, knowledge, and happiness, just as darkness is true of the opposite of all that.” So God is the essence and source of all these things: of perfect purity without sin, complete truth without any error, absolute knowledge without any ignorance on any subject and infinite happiness, so that nothing can make Him miserable.

II. SECOND, THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHES THAT MANKIND BY NATURE ABHORS THE LIGHT. – John 3:19 – “This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.” – By nature, without God’s intervention in our lives, we would sin against God; we would remain in spiritual ignorance and believe the lies of the Satan; we would be without the knowledge of God; the inevitable result of which is unhappiness and pain.

III. THIRD, THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT JESUS IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

Illus. – A little boy forgot his lines in a Christmas presentation. His mother was in the front row to prompt him, so she gestured and formed the words silently with her lips, but to no avail, his mind just went blank. Finally, she leaned in and whispered the cue, “I am the light of the world.” The child beamed and with great feeling and a loud clear voice said, “My mother is the light of the world.”

Now, while our mothers **are a light** in our lives: JESUS is **the** light of the world. This is how John introduces Jesus as “the Word” that became flesh in John 1:4-5 – “In Him was life, and that life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.” When Jesus was born into this world, He was the one who manifested God on this earth. He shined for all the purity, truth, knowledge and happiness of God.

However, as thrilled as they all were that night, they still did not understand the light. They all knew something very special had happened, but at that time they could not have known that life as they knew it would never be the same again. This was just the beginning of their understanding of the newborn king.

IV. FOURTH, WHEN WE'RE SAVED, WE COME INTO THE LIGHT.

Paul says in Ephesians 5:8,9 – “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of the light for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth” We possess the light of God so that we share in the purity, truth, knowledge and happiness of God through our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The message here is that the light brings with it conditions as to how we are to live. The incredible light brought by that little child so long ago would not only illuminate our paths to righteousness, it would also illuminate our faults.

V. FINALLY, THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHES THAT BELIEVERS ARE TO SHARE THE LIGHT WITH OTHERS SO THAT THEY TOO CAN BE LIGHT.

Paul says that we are ministers whose responsibility it is “To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and a place among those who are sanctified.” (Acts 26:18)

As we prepare sing our candlelight hymns and each light our candles, all these lights represent God’s light spread from one single candle—the source. As each candle lights another candle, light will grow brighter and darkness will be pushed back.

This story of Jesus, born in a manger so long ago who came to die for our sins...may God help us tell the story to our friends, loved ones, co-workers, and through missions, to the whole world, and thereby spread the light of God throughout the whole earth!

Illus. – North of Yellowstone Park, there are beautiful caverns. The story of how the caverns were discovered is that one of the original explorers was walking along the top of a mountain and fell through a hole, dropping several hundred feet into a cavern and was stuck in almost total darkness for over a week, no food, no water.

He cried out every day, "Help me!" hoping that somebody would hear his voice and save him from a slow, agonizing death. Fortunately, someone heard his faint cry and looking around, found the hole, and with the help of other rescuers, dug him out.

And that's how they found the magnificence of caverns that could have been hidden forever.

Later, someone asked this man, "How did you hold on to hope day after day after day in the dark without giving up?" He replied, "There was one little pinhole ray of light that that I could see above, and I just kept focused on that ray of light."

Many around us in this nation tonight are like that man down in the cave: They're in darkness, looking for a way out. Brothers and sisters, Jesus is the light of the world and He is still shining today. May we shine brightly and bring the light of Jesus to those in darkness.

Amen!